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ABSTRACT

A survey of the language usage patterns in Zaire begins with an overview of usage of French as the official language and Swahili, Lingala, Ciluba, and Kikongo as the four national languages used both in their respective regions and as part of the mixture of languages used for official and unofficial communication purposes. The systematic study of the languages and development of orthographies and some standardized dialects during French colonization, and recent trends in language policy and preservation are outlined. A matrix follows that rates each of these languages on: (1) their usage rating using State Department classifications; (2) increase and decrease trends by the year 2000; (3) chief of state use in addressing and populace; (4) use in armed forces; (5) use in government, court, and diplomatic communications, written and oral; (6) use as a language of instruction or required language in higher education, on the secondary and elementary levels, and in adult education; (7) use in the popular press, radio and television broadcasting, and film; (8) business and professional use, written and oral; (9) use in intellectual circles; (10) the alphabet situation; (11) their status in literature; (12) use in public signs and notices; and (12) the availability of instructional materials and dictionaries for use by English speakers. Explanatory notes give the number and population percentage using the languages, the type of alphabets used, and specific instructional material titles. A selected bibliography is also included. (MSE)

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Language/Area Reference Center

COUNTRY STATUS REPORT:

ZAIRE

September 1984

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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Zaire - 1, Overview

French is the official language of Zaire. Additionally, there are four languages which have been designated "national" languages by the Zairian government: Swahili, Lingala, Ciluba and Kikongo. These four languages are essentially the ones used in their respective regions for administration, in the courts, in regional press, as media of instruction for the first two years of primary school, and for conducting day to day business activities.

There is no official document specifying the use of the national languages, but they are used in virtually all aspects of life in Zaire. The President of the Republic uses Lingala in all his public meetings; the military and political officials use the national languages in addressing the public; intellectuals use the national languages in all except the most formal situations when they resort to French. French is used infrequently by the Zairian population, yet it continues to have great prestige.

Swahili is found in the Shaba region, in Haut Zaire and in Kivu. It is used for administration and education in Shaba and the eastern part of the country. Lingala is used for administration and education in Kinshasa and in the Equatorial Region. Furthermore, Lingala is the official language of the Armed Forces of Zaire and of the M.P.R. (Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution) Party, the sole political party in the country. Although French is the principal language used in the press and on radio and television, Lingala is the dominant language used on the Voice of Zaire and in the oral press in Kinshasa. The use of Lingala is spreading, partially as a result of it being the language of the armed forces which are stationed throughout the country, but primarily because of its use in Zairian music. About 70-80% of musical lyrics are composed in Lingala. Ciluba is used administratively and for education in the regions of Kasai Oriental and Kasai Occidental. It is also used in the press and on the radio in these regions. Kikongo is the language of administration and is used in education and in the press in Bas Zaire, as well as on Radio-Kinshasa.

The four national languages were used regularly in spoken and written form by the colonial authorities when, as the Belgian Congo, Zaire was a colony of Belgium. Systematic study of these languages during the colonial period, particularly by missionaries, led to the development of orthographies and, in the instance of Ciluba and Lingala, of standardized dialects which were adopted for use by the authorities. Standardized forms were never formally adopted for Swahili or Kikongo. Education during the colonial period tended to be in the vernaculars. Nevertheless, the vernaculars were generally regarded by the colonial administration as inferior linguistic forms, inadequate for conveying knowledge.

After independence, the Congolese desire for education equal to that found in Belgium led to a French-only policy in education. A reform commission in 1967 insisted on the necessity for instruction in the vernaculars. It was not until 1975, however, that the national languages were reintroduced as the media of instruction in the first two primary grades. In 1967 though an adult education service was created which provided instruction only in the national languages.

In the last decade, the Mobutuism movement (after the president Mobutu Sese Seko) has led to an increased sense of need for preserving and developing the national languages as it is felt that it is through these the Zairian really manifests his authenticity. The notion of authenticity is a going back to the old names, cultural beliefs and ideals, and has influenced policy at all levels of Zairian life.

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Zaire - 2, Use Matrix

ZAIRE

Languages

Factoids	French	Swahili	Lingala	Ciluba	Kikongo
1. Usage rating*	2	3	3	3	3
2. Increase/decrease	2	1	1	2	2
3. Chief of State use?	1	0	1	0	0
4. Armed Forces/written	2	0	2	0	0
5. Armed Forces/oral	2	0	1	0	0
6. Government/written	1	0	2	0	0
7. Government/oral, national	1	0	2	0	0
8. Government/oral, local	2	2	2	2	2
9. Court/written	2	2	2	2	2
10. Court/oral	2	2	2	2	2
11. Diplomatic use?	1	0	0	0	0
12. Higher education	1	0	0	0	0
13. Higher ed: required?	1	0	0	0	0
14. Secondary education	1	0	0	0	0
15. Secondary: required?	1	0	0	0	0
16. Primary education	1	1	1	1	1
17. Primary: required?	1	0	0	0	0
18. Adult education	0	2	2	2	2
19. Popular press use	1	3	3	3	3
20. Transmission across borders?	1	0	1	0	0
21. Use in radio broadcasting	2	2	2	2	2
22. Use in TV broadcasting	1	0	1	0	2
23. Use in film	2	0	0	0	0
24. Business/professional/written	2	2	2	0	0
25. Business/professional/oral	2	1	1	3	3
26. Use in intellectual circles	1	0	0	0	0
27. Alphabet situation*	1	1	1	1	1
28. Status of literature	1	2	2	2	2
29. Use in signs?	1	1	1	1	1
30. Teaching materials*	1	1	2	2	2
31. Bilingual dictionaries*	1	1	2	2	2

Notes:

Matrix figures are explained on following pages

? = information unavailable within time frame of project

- = not applicable

* = footnotes on following pages

FOOTNOTES

1. 1984 ESTIMATES, NUMBERS OF NATIVE SPEAKERS

Language	Number of native speakers	Percentage of population
French	320,000	1.0
Swahili	11,583,500	36.0
Lingala	9,583,500	28.0
Ciluba	5,470,000	17.0
Kikongo	3,861,200	12.0

27. TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

Language	Alphabet
French	Roman
Swahili	Roman with additional characters
Lingala	Roman with additional characters
Ciluba	Roman with additional characters
Kikongo	Roman with additional characters

30. TEACHING MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Language	Texts
Swahili	Chiraghdin, Shihabuddin. Kiswahili. (Longman Certificate Notes) Nairobi, Kenya: Longman, 1974.
	Hassan, Mohamed M. Tuseme Kiswahili. Berkeley, CA: Simba Publishers, 1973.
	Hinnebusch, Thomas J. and Sarah M. Mirza. Kiswahili: Msingi wa Kusema, Kusoma, na Kuandika (Swahili: a foundation for speaking, reading and writing). Washington, DC: University Press of America, Inc., 1979.
Lingala	Bokamba, Eyamba K. Ekolongonelo ya Lingala: an introductory course. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, African Studies Program, 1979.
	Odhner, John D. English-Lingala Manual. Washington, DC: University Press of America, Inc., 1981.
	Redden, James et. al. Lingala Basic Course. Washington, DC: Foreign Service Institute, Dept. of State, 1970.

30. TEACHING MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS (continued)

Language	Texts
Ciluba	Beckett, H. W. Hand Book of Kiluba (Luba-Katanga). Mulongou, Zaire: Garenganze Evangelical Mission, 1951.
	Morrison, William M. Grammar and Dictionary of the Buluba-Lulua Language as Spoken in the Upper Kasai and Congo Basin. New York: American Tract Society, 1906.
Kikongo	Severn, Beth. Kikongo Language Manual. Nyack, NY: Christian Missionary Alliance, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 1956.
	Swift, Lloyd B. and E, W, A, Zola. Kituba Basic Course. Washington, DC: Foreign Service Institute, Dept. of State, 1963.

31. DICTIONARIES FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Language	Text
Swahili	Jahadhmy, Ali Ahmed. Swahili-English Dictionary. Berkeley, CA: University of California, forthcoming.
	Rechenbach, Charles W. et. al. Swahili-English Dictionary. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968.
	Snoxall, R. A. Concise English-Swahili Dictionary (Kamusi ya Kiingereza-Kiswahili). Nairobi, Kenya: Oxford University Press, 1972 . [Reprint of London, 1958 edition]
Lingala	Rechenbach, Charles W. et. al. Lingala-English Dictionary. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 1962-62.
	Samarin, William J. et. al. A two-way dictionary of Bangala and English based on Handboekje tot aanleeran der taal gebuikt in de Norbertijner Missien van Oewelee (Belgium 1901). Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto, Department of Linguistics, 1975.
Ciluba	Bronghall Woods, R. E. A Short Introductory Dictionary of the Kaonde Language, with English-Kaonde Appendix. London: Religious Tract Society, 1924. [O.P.]
Kikongo	Craven, Henry and John Barfield. English-Congo and Congo-English Dictionary. (The Black Heritage Library Collection) Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971. [Reprint of London, 1883 edition]
	Fehderau, Harold W. Dictionnaire kikongo (Ya Leta)- anglais - francais. Kikongo (Ya Leta) - English - French Dictionary. Kinshasa, Zaire: Editions Leco, 1969.

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Bokamba, Eyamba G. "Authenticity and the choice of a national language: the case of Zaire." Presence Africaine, Nos. 99/100, 1976,

Bokonga Ekanga Botombele. Communication Policies in Zaire. Paris: UNESCO, 1980.

_____. Cultural Policy in the Republic of Zaire. Paris: The UNESCO Press, 1976.

Bongo, Andre. "Zaire," in Langues et Politiques de Langues en Afrique Noire, edited by Alfa Ibrahim Sow. Paris: Nubia/UNESCO, 1977.

Faik, Sully et. al. Le Zaire: deuxieme pays francophone du monde? Quebec: Centre International de Recherche sur le Bilinguisme, 1977.

Heine, Bernd. Status and Use of African Lingua Francas. Munich: Weltforum Verlag, 1970.

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Klima, Vladimir et. al. Black Africa: Literature and Language. Dordrecht, Holland and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1976.

Kotey, Paul F. A. and Haig Der-Houssikian (eds.). Language and Linguistic Problems in Africa. Columbia, SC: Hornbeam Press, 1977.

Mudimbe, V. Y. "Le Zaire," in Inventaire des etudes linguistiques sur les pays d'Afrique noire d'expression francaise et sur Madagascar. Paris: Conseil International de la Langue Francaise, 1978.

Sesep N'Sial Bal-a-Nsien. La Querelle Linguistique au Zaire. Lubumbashi, Zaire: CELTA (Centre de Linguistique Theorique et Appliquee), Universite Nationale du Zaire, 1978.

Tran Hong Cam and M. LeBoul. "De l'usage du francais et des langues bantu au Zaire," in Les relations entre les langues negro-africaines et la langue francaise. Paris: Conseil International de la Langue Francaise, 1977.

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - a

1. Usage rating, using the State Department classifications
   1: Official language, most widely used.
   2: Official language, not most widely used.
   3: Widely used language, but not official. (Over 10% of population)
   4: Unofficial language used by significant minority (but less than 3)
   5: Unofficial language used by influential minority
   FOOTNOTE: NUMBERS OF SPEAKERS, PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

2. Increase/decrease trends by the year 2000
   1: Number of native speakers will increase in proportion
   2: Number of native speakers will remain proportionally constant
   3: Number of native speakers will decrease in proportion

3. Chief of State use, in addressing populace: YES (1) NO (0)

4. Armed Forces written communications
   1: Only language used in official communiques
   2: One of the languages used in official communiques
   0: Not used in official communiques

5. Armed Forces oral communications
   1: Used on all levels
   2: Used among officers only
   3: Used among multi-lingual NCO's and troops
   4: Used among monolingual troops only
   0: Not used

6. Written government communications
   1: Only language used in official communications
   2: One of the languages used in official communications
   0: Not used in official communications

7. Oral government communications/national level
   1: Official language spoken in national assembly
   2: One of the official languages spoken in national assembly
   0: Not used in government

8. Oral government communications/local level
   1: Official language in local government
   2: One of the official languages used in local government
   3: Allowed in local government proceedings, translated into official language
   0: Not used in local government

9. Court use in written communications
   1: Only language used in official communications
   2: One of the languages used in official communications
   0: Not used

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - b

10. Court use in oral communications
    1: Only official language used in court
    2: One of the official languages used in court
    3: Allowed in courts, translated into official language(s)
    0: Not used in courts

11. Diplomatic use in notes to other countries: YES (1) NO (0)

12. Use in higher education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used

13. Language taught as subject in required courses in higher education:
    YES (1) NO (0)

14. Use in secondary education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used as medium of instruction

15. Language taught as subject in required courses on secondary level?
    YES (1) NO (0)

16. Use in primary education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used as medium of instruction

17. Language taught as subject in required courses on primary level?
    YES (1) NO (0)

18. Language use in adult education
    1: Used in oral and written technical instruction
    2: Used in oral and written life skills instruction
    3: Used in oral life skills instruction
    4: Used in literacy classes only
    0: Not used in adult informal education

19. Language use in popular press
    1: Used in publications throughout country
    2: Used in centrally-based publications with national distribution
    3: Used only in regional and local publications
    4: Used in clandestine publications only
    0: Not used

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - c

20. Language used in radio/TV transmission across national borders?
YES (1) NO (0)

21. Language use in radio broadcasting
1: Language used broadcasting thoughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national broadcasts
3: Language used in local broadcasting only
3: Language used in clandestine broadcasting only
0: Language not used in radio broadcasting

22. Language use in TV broadcasting
1: Language used in telecasting throughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national telecasting
3: Language used regional and local telecasting only
0: Language not used in TV

23. Language use in film
1: Language used in indigenous film-making
2: Foreign-language films dubbed/subtitled into language
0: Language not used in films

24. Business/Professional use - written
1: Sole official language in business and professional communications
2: One of the official languages in business and professional communication
0: Not used

25. Business/Professional use - oral
1: Used in trade and commerce throughout country
2: Used in national trade and commerce only
3: Used only in local trade and commerce

26. Language use in intellectual circles
1: Language used in indigenous scholarly publications
2: Language used in formal scholarly discussion
0: Language not used

27. Alphabet situation
1: Established standardized alphabet exists.
2: Alphabet developed, no standardization
3: Competing alphabets exist
0: No alphabet exists
FOOTNOTE: TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

28. Status of indigenous literature
1: Established written tradition exists
2: Literature tradition emerging
3: Popular literature exists
0: No written literature exists

29. Language used in official public signs, notices: YES (1) NO (0)

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - d

30. Teaching materials for English speakers
    1: Wide range of teaching materials exists
    2: Narrow range of teaching materials exists
    0: No teaching materials exist
    FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

31. Dictionaries for English speakers
    1: Wide range of bilingual dictionaries exists
    2: Narrow range of dictionaries exists
    0: No dictionaries exist
    FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY